

~~(U//FOUO)~~ History Today - 22 June 2009

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(U) In March 1940, British cryptanalysts solved the version of the ENIGMA machine used by German railways to secure communications. Brigadier John Tiltman had discovered two messages "in depth", allowing eventual solution. This version of the ENIGMA was less sophisticated than the military model; it

lacked a plugboard.

(U) Most of the decrypts were routine, but allowed British intelligence analysts to follow some German military movements, as troops and equipment were transported to support operations.

(U) However, shortly after it was solved, the railway network went silent. A six-month period of communications silence ensued. The nets reappeared in January 1941.

(U) By March, the railway messages showed the transfer of tanks from Bucharest to Poland. This movement coincided with the surrender to Germany of Yugoslavia's Prince Paul. Some tanks returned south when anti-Nazi officers in Belgrade took power through a coup.

(U) Prime Minister Winston Churchill realized what the original German movement had meant and what the redeployment toward Yugoslavia would mean. He quickly sent a note to Josef Stalin in the USSR:

*(U) I have sure information from a trusted agent that when the Germans thought they had got Yugoslavia in a net -- that is to say, after March 20 -- they began to move three out of five Panzer divisions from Rumania to Southern Poland. The moment they heard of the Serbian revolution this movement was countermanded. Your Excellency will readily appreciate the significance of these facts.*

(U) Churchill had correctly reasoned that the Germans had intended to invade the Soviet Union in May, but that the continuing problems in Yugoslavia had forced them to delay the attack. Stalin, who did not see the underlying intelligence source, discounted this interpretation. He assumed the German tank deployments were largely to put pressure on him for diplomatic concessions. Churchill sent further warnings based on decrypts, with the source carefully disguised, but Stalin refused to change his position.

(U) On June 22, German forces -- 3,500,000 troops and 3,350 tanks, including those in the photograph -- attacked the USSR.

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(U) [Larger view of photo](#)

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